DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 139 452 JC 770 271

AUTHOR Jansen, Udo H.; Vitzhum, Edward F.
TITLE Public Relations in Community Colleges: A Growing Concept.
PUB DATE [76]
NOTE 22p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Administrative Personnel; *Administrator Responsibility; Audiences; Budgets; Community Colleges; Job Analysis; *Junior Colleges; Objectives; Program Evaluation; Publicize; *Public Relations; School Community Relationship; Student Recruitment; *Surveys

ABSTRACT

Questionnaires were mailed to a random sample of 159 community and junior colleges in the 19 North Central Association states in a study of public relations (PR) in two-year colleges. Areas examined included the "publics" upon which PR programs focused, techniques employed, financial support, methods of evaluation, and selected characteristics of directors of public relations programs. Fifty-seven percent of the institutions surveyed responded. Findings of the study revealed: (1) 93% of the colleges had a staff member with primary responsibility for the institution's PR; (2) 59% of the PR directors reported to the president; (3) for the majority of PR personnel, PR was not a full-time job; (4) colleges with small enrollments spent less time on PR than did larger institutions; (5) long-range PR goals had been adopted by only 27% of the institutions, while 65% had adopted specific short-term goals; (6) key audiences toward which major PR efforts were directed included community residents, potential students in local/area high schools, and currently enrolled students; and (7) the most frequently used method of evaluating the PR effort was analysis of enrollment. Overall, it was noted that two-year colleges have made considerable progress in recent years in the development of PR programs, although considerable room for improvement still exists. (JDS)

****
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

ED 077427

PUBLIC RELATIONS IN COMMUNITY COLLEGES: A GROWING CONCEPT

By

Udo H. Jansen

and

Edward F. Vitzhum

University of Nebraska

JC 720 471

INTRODUCTION

During the 1960's and early 70's, the unprecedented growth of American two-year colleges was heralded both in the United States and abroad. At this particular time in the history of post-secondary education, public demand for increased technical training and for more continuing, life-long education found the community college uniquely equipped, both philosophically and programmatically, to provide such opportunities. Enrollments bulged; new and expanded programs flourished. The "social invention" of the 60's was acclaimed with substantial increases in both moral and financial support from state legislatures and the local patrons. The idea of community college education became a generally accepted fact!

Now, in the late 70's, however, a disturbing fact must be faced: although the marriage between community colleges and the public is intact, the honeymoon may well be over! Enrollment trends no longer spiral astronomically and legislators seem increasingly reluctant to grant budget requests. It has even become apparent that not everyone has a clear vision of the mission of the two-year college. These recent developments cause one to wonder if the disenchantment with higher education, which struck the four-year colleges and universities, in some instances five or more years ago, will stretch its hand to include our fledgling community colleges as well.

One possible means of counteracting this negative trend in public support lies in the public relations function of these colleges. Not only must we continue and increase our emphasis upon this function, but a change in focus is called for. Justification for establishing new institutions must be supplanted by carefully planned programs of both short- and long-range goals to provide those services and fulfill those promises so optimistically stated 10-15 years ago.

PURPOSE

The intent of this investigation was to identify and examine certain constructs utilized by two-year institutions in their public relations program. Specifically the investigators identified the "publics" upon which public relations programs focused, the techniques employed, financial support, methods of evaluation, as well as certain characteristics of the various directors of PR programs.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Streloff, in his "Guide to Junior College Public Relations," uses the term public relations interchangeably with public information and community relations, defining them as college-intiated activities which (1) further public understanding of education and (2) provide college authorities with an understanding of public opinion, in order to help the college improve its educational functions in society. Cutlip and Center (Effective Public Relations), by contrast, make an important distinction, defining public relations operationally as "the planned effort to influence opinion through acceptable performance and two-way communications." The critical concepts in their definition are that effective public relations constitute "planned effort" and that the intent is to "influence opinion." The design of this study was premised upon the Culip and Center definition.

PROCEDURE

A random sample was drawn of 156 public and private two-year institutions in the 19 North Central Association states as listed in the Community and Junior College Directory.

A 13-question survey instrument (Appendix A) was designed and mailed in the fall of 1976, to presidents of the institutions. A total of 89 (57%) of the questionnaires were returned.

FINDINGS

An overwhelming majority (93%) of the institutions reported that some college staff member had been assigned primary responsibility for the institutional PR program. This represents an almost complete reversal in this aspect of community junior college administration. According to a study by Loschen (1948), none of the 444 junior colleges operating at that time had a PR person on staff. Even as recently as 1970, Tendler found that only 53% of the institutions had hired a full-time PR person.

While there was near unanimity in delegating primary responsibility for institutional PR to one individual, the reverse was true regarding the title assigned this individual. A total of 49 different titles were reported by 82 institutions whose representative completed this portion of the questionnaire. The three most frequently employed titles embody the terms which Streloff used interchangeably in defining "public relations": Director of Public Information (10), Director of Public Relations (8), and Director of Community Relations (6).

Table 1

Titles Used for PR Officer

Director of Public Information	10
Director of Public Relations	8
Director of Community Relations	6
Director of College Relations	5
Public Information Officer	4
Administrative Assistant	3
Dean of Community Services	2
President	2
Public Information Sepcialist	2
Other Titles	40

Goal Statements

Budd in 1971 succinctly pointed to the need for both long- and short-range goals in institutional public relations planning.

> "A public relations program that just oozes into being, that grows without any clear-cut definition of its objectives to give it specific purpose, that exists without an examination of its course by the institutions; policy-makers, will be a poor and disappointing investment. And its public relations architect will become schizoid in his frustrated efforts to please all and earn his keep."

One hypothesis of this study, therefore, was that formulation of short- and long-range goals might provide an index to the degree to which the institutions perceived public relations as a tool for meeting certain institutional needs.

Analysis of data in TableII reveals the tendency not to use long-range goals was almost identical statistically to the tendency to use short-term goals.

More than two-thirds (70%) of all the colleges surveyed had not identified long-range goals. Only 24 of the 86 respondents said their institutions were presently in the process of adopting long-range goals.

Conversely, 58 institutions had identified short-term goals: 29 institutions had not; two gave no response.

Among the 29 responding colleges with 1,000 or less enrollment, there was nearly an even split (16-13), among those with and those without stated short-term goals. However, when the patterns of the larger institutions (1,000 and above) were examined, the overwhelming majority (35-9) had established short-term goals.

Table II

Institutional Use of Long-Range and Short-Term Goals

Enrollment 1,000 and Under			
Long-Range		Short-Term	
Yes	1	Yes	16
No	28	No	13
No Response	1	No Response	1
1,001 - 3,000			
Long-Range		Short-Term	
Yes	8	Yes	19
No	14	No	4
No Response	2	No Response	1
3,000 and over			
Long-Range		Short-Term	
Yes	9	Yes	16
No	12	No	5
No Response	-	No Response	-

Function Performed

In order to determine where the insitutions concentrated their PR effort the survey instrument included a list of public relations functions commonly performed at institutions of higher education. Respondents were asked to rank these functions two ways: in terms of the amount of time they presently devote to performing the function, and secondly in terms of benefits accuring to the institution as a result of performing the function.

Five of the ten functions were accorded rankings amoung the top five both for (a) time devoted to and (b) benefits accured from. These five were, in order of mean rankings: news/feature writing, publications writing/editing, and media relations tied for second and third ranking, publications writing/editing, alumni relations.

Following, in order, were special events, internal relations, alumni relations and governmental relations tied; and lastly, develoment.

Table III contains figures showing total and mean weightings for each function according to time expended and benefits accorded, as well as final ranking of each function.

Organizational Accountability

There was a definite pattern to have the PR person report to the highest ranking administrative officer--the president. This trend was consistent with that reported by Tendler, and the rationale for it is universally the same.

In this survey, 48 of 81 respondents (fractionally over 59%) reported to a college president. Four reported to a District Director; three each to Vice Presidents of Administrative Services, Vice Presidents, and Campus Deans; while two each said they reported to Deans of the College and to Boards of Trustees. (The latter were the two presidents who reported having primary responsibility for PR on their campuses.) Sixteen of the PR people (approximately 20 percent) reported to some other college official.

Support Staff

The individual having primary PR responsibilities typically was given staff support; 57 of the 89 respondents (64%) reported having at least one additional person, either full- or part-time. Twenty-three respondents listed one additional person; 13 reported two, nine listed three, four listed four persons and eight institutions listed five or more. In the group listing five or more, two respondents annotated the questionnaire with remarks indicating that all personnel shared PR responsibilities. Only 32 institutions (36%) reported either no additional staff help or gave no response.

Table

Public Relations Functions, According to Time Devoted and Benefits Accorded, by Mean Weightings and Rank*

		/Time Devoted/		/Benfits Accrued/		
Function	Number of Institutions Utilizing	Mean Weighting	Rank	Mean	Rank	Overall Rank
News/Feature Writing	77	2.49	1	3.12	1	1
Student Recruitment	72	4.35	4	3.58	2	2.5
Community Relations	74	4.15	3	3.86	3	2.5
Publications Writing/Editing	75	3.80	2	4.98	4	4
Media Relations	78	4.47	5	4.40	5	5
Special Events	71	5.07	6	5.48	6	6
Internal Relations	71	4.49	7	5.91	7	7
Governmental Relations	63	6.94	8	7.03	8	8.5
Alumni Relations	63	6.97	9	6.78	9	8.5
Development	58	7.93	10	7.15	10	10

*Respondents ranked each function, if utilized by their institution, with 1 representing highest (best) . . . 10 lowest (worst).

Table IV

Additional Personnel with PR Responsibilities

None/No Response	32
1	23
2	13
3	9
4	4
5 or more	8

Work Load

It was hypothesized that institutional size would be a significant determinant in certain aspects of public relations programs. Enrollment data as listed in the Directory were used.

These data provided the basis for correlation with two other data categories developed by the survey: (a) amount of time devoted to public relations functions, and (b) total years experience in public relations of the individual to whom primary responsibility had been delegated.

As size of the institutions increased, so did the percentage of time devoted to PR by the individual primarily responsible. At institutions with over 3,000 enrollees, 86% of the "directors" spent three-fourths or more of their time in activities directly related to public relations. At those institutions with fewer than 1,000, only 27% of the "directors" spent an equivalent (75% or more) amount of time in PR work.

In terms of total professional experience, 37 of the 75 reported having five or fewer years experience in PR, and 53 of the 75 reported 10 or fewer years experience. No significant difference in experience as related to size to institutions was found.

More than half of the respondents had either teaching or administrative responsibilities in addition to their public relations duties or were hired on a

part-time basis only. Approximately 70% of the respondents indicated they had administrative responsibilities and 27% had teaching duties. Three percent were only part-time employees.

Table V

Enrollment Size Relative to Time Devoted to PR Activities and Years of Experience of the PR Person

Enrollment 1,000 and Under

Amount of Time Spent			Experience		
75-100%	7	27%	1-5 years	17	57%
50-74%	3	12%	6-10 years	4	13%
25-49%	3	12%	11-15 years	1	3%
0 -24%	12	40%	16 or more	3	10%
No Response	5	3%	No Response	5	17%

Enrollment 1,001 - 3,000

Amount of Time Spent			Experience		
75-100%	10	41%	1-5 years	12	30%
50-74%	6	25%	6-10 years	5	21%
25-49%	3	13%	11-15 years	1	4%
0 -24%	3	13%	16 or more	5	21%
No Response	2	8%	No Response	1	4%

Enrollment 3,001 and Over

Amount of Time Spent			Experience		
75-100%	18	86%	1-5 years	8	36%
50-74%	2	9%	6-10 years	7	30%
25-49%	-	-	11-15 years	1	5%
0 -24%	1	5%	16 or more	7	30%
No Response	2	-	No Response	-	-

Table VI

Other Duties of Those Not Full-Time in PR

Teaching	13	27%
Administration	34	70%
Part-Time	2	3%

Audiences

Respondents were asked to list the three key audiences (or publics) to whom major effort in the PR program was directed. Respondents were not asked to rank the audience in order of relative importance, nor was a suggested list of audiences provided from which selections could be made.

Despite the wide variety of terminology used to describe them, the three key audiences in order of mention, were:

Students (both currently enrolled and prospective)	75
Local community residents	70
Institutional audiences (faculty, staff, alumni, etc.)	25

The only other audiences/publics named by at least 10 respondents were: local business and industry and legislative-governmental audiences.

Some respondents made little effort to make detailed identification of key audiences. There was a large number of "no response," and one respondent who did complete that portion of the survey entered the single word "community" in all three spaces.

Budgetary Consideration

As expected, larger PR budgets were found in the larger shcools. However, the size of institution seemingly had no effect upon the percent of total budget devoted to public relations. The range of percent of total budget expended to support PR was from less than 1/2 or 1% to a high of 3.5%.

Table VII

Institutional PR Budgets

Enrollment 1,000 and Under			
Lowest Budget :	$ 750	Lowest Percentage :	.0041
Highest Budget:	$ 25,000	Highest Percentage:	3.0
Median :	$ 8,486	Median :	NC*
Enrollment 1,001 - 3,000			
Lowest Budget :	$ 3,000	Lowest Percentage :	.005
Highest Budget:	$ 90,000	Highest Percentage:	3.5
Median :	$ 30,988	Median :	1.158
Not including salary			
Enrollment 3,001 and Over			
Lowest Budget :	$ 25,000	Lowest Percentage :	.0037
Highest Budget:	$600,000	Highest Percentage:	2.0
Median :	$ 94,717	Median :	NC

*NC=not computed

Evaluation

Methods used by respondents to evaluate results of PR efforts also were diverse. The same approach was used in this item as in the key audience identification question. Blank spaces were provided for listing recurring methods of PR program evaluation, and no list of suggested methods was included from which selections could be made.

As expected, there was diversity of expression, but responses could be grouped into four basic categories:

Enrollment and participation analysis	29
"Feedback" (both solicited and unsolicited) from students, faculty, staff, and community sources	22
Surveys of students, public and staff	18
Media coverage analysis (including frequency of release publication/broadcast, response to releases, solicited feedback from media people)	16

There were 19 respondents who did not complete this portion of the survey. Several of those who did used more than one evaluative technique. A detailed summary of all responses appears in Appendix 4.

SUMMARY - CONCLUSIONS

This study of public relations programs of two-year colleges was undertaken by designing and mailing questionnaires on general characteristics of PR programs to 156 institutions in the 19 North Central Association states selected from the Community and Junior College Directory. Completed questionnaires were returned by 89 colleges (57%) and these constitute the sample for this study.

Ninety-three percent of the respondents reported that some member of the college faculty-staff had been assigned primary responsibility for the institutional PR. These individuals had been given 49 different titles, only nine of which were used by more than one institution. More than half (59%) of the PR people reported to the college president.

For a majority of the PR people, public relations is not a full-time job; over half report having either teaching or administrative duties in addition to PR responsibilities, and in at least one case there was both. A substantial proportion of the respondents indicated that help was available in discharging PR responsibilities. Sixty-four percent had one or more additional persons with PR responsibilities as part of their official job description.

Both the amount of time devoted to PR responsibilites and the total years experience in PR of the individual with primary responsibilities had a relationship to enrollment statistics for the institutions surveyed. Colleges with the smaller enrollments tended to spend the least time on PR efforts, those with the larger enrollments the most. The same pattern was valid relative to experience; individuals with more years of total experience in PR tended to be affiliated with the larger institutions.

Specific long-range written goals were largely non-existent; adopted by only 24 institutions (27%). Specific written short-term goals were more prevalent, reported by 58 institutions (approximately 65%).

In ranking 10 typical public relations activities in terms of time devoted to the activity, News and feature writing, publications writing and editing and community relations ranked highest. Ranked in terms of payoff - benefits accruing to the institution - the same activities ranked high. Only one change - student recruitment replaced publications as the second choice.

Residents of the community or college area were the key audiences to whom major PR efforts were directed. Potential students in local and area high schools and currently enrolled students were second and third choices.

Methods of evaluating results of PR efforts were diverse. Analysis of enrollment including tallies of special course responses and mail registrations was the single most widely used technique.

Implications

There is no question that two-year colleges have made major progress in recent years in developing public relations programs. The data in this study, however, indicates considerable latitude for further development. Public relations has long ago been demonstrated to be an invaluable asset in helping achieve the goals of educations institutions. It has not as yet been proven in the shaping of public opinion, insofar as the two-year college is concerned. The effectiveness of Public Relations, however, will be directly proportional to the quality of the personnel primarily responsible for implementing the PR program, the resources allocated to the program, and the effort invested. Although no data was gathered on this aspect, the advent of contractual arrangements with commercial firms to conduct public relations programs for the two-year institutions is unheard of. The need is evident; it remains only to determine how quickly we can gain the expertise, and the willingness, to deliver.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Budd, John F., Jr. "A Board Member Looks at PR." College and University Journal, Vol. 10, Number 4, September, 1971.

Cutlip, Scott M., and Allen H. Carter, Effective Public Relations, Englewood Cliffs, NJ; Prentice Hall, 1964 ed.

Loschen, Roger T., "Public Relations Problems Unique to the Junior Colleges." Junior College Journal, Vol. XXXII, Number 4, December, 1961.

Streloff, Alexander N. Guide to Public Relations for Junior Colleges, Cincinnati, South-Western Publishing Co., 1961.

Tendler, Mitchell. "Case for the Public Information Officer." Junior College Journal, Vol. 50, Number 5, February, 1970.

KEY AUDIENCES

Students (Enrolled/Prospective)

Identifying Term	Frequency of Mention
Prospective Students	31
Students	22
High School Students	7
Area High Schools	1
Students/potential students	3
High School Junior/Seniors	3
Youth 18-22	1
Adult students	2
Prospective adult students	1
Adults	1
Total	74

Local Community

Local Community	16
General Public	14
Taxpayers	11
External Community	7
External Citizenry	4
Community	5
Community Residents	2
Community Residents/business	2
Community leaders/officials	2
Residents	3
Community Adults	1

(Local Community continued)

Adults	1
Parents	4
College District	3
Employed Adults	2
External Audience	1
College Service Area	1
Total	79

Institutional Audience

Faculty/Staff	8
Faculty	2
Staff	3
College Personnel	2
Alumni	2
Internal Staff	1
Internal Audience	2
Institution's employees	2
Other institution's personnel	1
District Staff	1
Students/Staff	1
College Student body	1
College Community	2
Parents of Students	1
Total	29

Special Publics

Businessmen	4
Employers	3

(Special Publics continued)

Business and Industry	2
Local business and industry	3
Business	1
Industry	1
Business community	2
Legislators	8
Politicians	1
Governmental Audiences	1
State Agencies	1
High School guidance counselors	2
Selected	1
High School administrators/faculties	1
Educational leaders	1
Community school personnel	1
Special publics	1
Potential donors	1
Philanthropic groups	1
Veterans	1
Women and older adults	1
Disadvantaged	2
Senior citizens	2
Community organizations/interest groups	2
Service clubs/civic groups	2
Newspapers	3
Newspaper readers	1
Radio	1
Total	51

EVALUATION METHODS

Enrollment and Participation

Technique/Methods	Frequency of Mention
Analysis of enrollment trends	20
Participation in special events	3
Enrollment in special classes	2
Mail registration	2
Adult participation in programs	1
Recruitment drives	1
Total	29

Surveys

Students	8
Staff	7
Community	3
Total	18

Feedback (Faculty, Staff, Community)

Community opinion feedback	6
Administration feedback	4
Audience feedback	3
Feedback from staff, students, residents	2
Student feedback	1
Feedback from board	1
Receiving, analyzing, utilizing feedback	1
Total	18

Media Coverage Analysis

Media coverage (frequency of release usage, response to release)	14
Policted feedback from media sources	2
Total	16

Miscellaneous

Advisory committees (faculty and lay)	6
Faculty evaluation	4
Success of development programs	3
Management by Objectives	3
Telephone and written inquiries	2
Personal contact with students	2
Quality, acceptance of publications	2
Annual report and evaluation	2
Staff conferences	1
District Staff evaluation	1
Informal observation	1
Community services	1
Scheduled interaction with key personnel	1
Passage of referendum	1
Results of PR efforts	1
Systems analysis of behavioral objectives	1
Total	32
None or no response	19

UNIVERSITY OF CALIF.
LOS ANGELES
1977
CLEARINGHOUSE FOR
JUNIOR COLLEGES